

Sexual Assault Awareness

Rape isn't an easy thing to talk about. There are many myths, half-truths, and misunderstandings about rape. These add to the confusion, and frequently even add to the danger.

Rape is a criminal offense. Most states define it legally as sexual intercourse achieved or attempted without the victim's consent and with the use of threat of force. Many states now define all forms of sexual conduct carried out against a person's will as a crime - a sexual assault - whether the individual is male or female.

Rape can happen to anyone, but National Crime Survey data indicates that women between 16 and 24 are particularly vulnerable. Many reported rapes happen between people who have known each other, seen each other, or met before. Rapes involving teens often are "acquaintance" rape and can happen on dates, in your home, and at parties. About one-third of all reported rapes are committed in the victim's home. In a stranger-rape situation, police believe that rapists tend to prey on women who look vulnerable because they appear frightened and easily intimidated, or who seem to be day dreaming so much that they can be taken by surprise.

- ◆ Make sure someone knows where you are and where you are going.
- ◆ Carry a cell phone with programmed numbers including the police.
- ◆ Become familiar with new areas before you go to them and take someone with you if your safety is uncertain.
- ◆ Be aware of places you can go for help, well-lighted busy areas.
- ◆ Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- ◆ Walk confidently, directly, at a steady pace, facing traffic.
- ◆ Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys.
- ◆ Don't walk alone at night; avoid areas where there are few people.
- ◆ Be careful when people stop you and ask questions. Always reply from a distance, and never get too close.
- ◆ If you are in trouble, attract help any way you can. Scream or yell for help.
- ◆ Use caution when interacting with people you do not know well enough to trust. If you do not trust them, you should not be alone and secluded with them.